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ABSTRACT

System totals of the attitude data regarding issues affecting education from the needs assessment study conducted by the Saginaw, Michigan Public Schools in the Spring of 1985 are summarized. The data are based on 2,100 questionnaire responses from parents, community members, students, administrators, and teachers. Results of the School-Community Survey are presented in detail for the twenty-one items which cover current educational issues. Topics include teacher accountability, school board representation, school district's spending, back-to-the-basics, truancy, public relations, extended day care, and parenting education programs. Data are presented for the elementary, secondary, and system levels. Results are examined in three ways: (1) issues on which there was agreement; (2) issues on which there were differences; and (3) patterns of responses between and within groups. On twelve of the issues, there is consensus supporting the superintendent of schools, back-to-the basics, action about truancy, extracurricular activities, vocational education, job placement and training programs, and professional development centers for teachers and administrators. Other findings are that school quality has improved; one-third of respondents have attended a board meeting; and parents are not doing well at raising children to be self-disciplined and responsible. (GDC)

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EVALUATION REPORT

ED263150

DISTRICT-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

SUMMARY OF SYSTEM TOTALS
PART II

1984-85

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Saginaw Public Schools
Saginaw, Michigan

DISTRICT-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

SUMMARY OF SYSTEM TOTALS PART II

1984-85

An Approved Report of the

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

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July, 1985

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
What Is a Needs Assessment?	2
Changes Since 1981 and Guidelines for Interpreting Results	3
This Report	3
SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985	5
SUMMARY	14
Areas of Agreement	16
Areas of Difference	18
Patterns of Results on Issues Questions Within and Between Respondent Groups	20
APPENDIX	23
Appendix A: Groups Surveyed and Return Rates for the 1985 Comprehensive School-Community Needs Assessment and A Study of Item Response Bias: Parent and Community Member Samples	25

INTRODUCTION

In Saginaw comprehensive needs assessments are conducted every three or four years for planning purposes. The last study was conducted during the 1980-1981 school year. This study was conducted during March and April of the current school year.

The study produces two basically different kinds of information: Priority Need Index (PNI) data which indicate which key ongoing functions or goals people perceive should be addressed and attitude or opinion data regarding current issues affecting education. For this reason the findings are published in two parts - Part I which deals with the PNI data and Part II which deals with perceptions of current issues. Both Part I and Part II are summarized at three different levels by producing an Elementary Level Report, Secondary Level Report, and System Level Report.

Information was gathered from parents, community members, students, administrators and teachers. Two thousand one hundred questionnaire responses were analyzed in this study (see Appendix A for a breakdown of returns by respondent group and a study of possible response bias for non-respondents). The confidence level and error tolerances for the parent and community member sub-samples were determined. Inferences to these populations can be made with 95% confidence for both groups with error tolerances of $\pm$ 4.3% for parents and $\pm$ 8.2% for community members.

What Is a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is a logical problem solving tool. It is usually the first step and a vital component of comprehensive program planning. A needs assessment is not a program change by itself, but it is a method for helping to determine if change is necessary or desired. It provides information which assists in setting priorities for future development and provides a basis for allocating scarce resources.

A needs assessment is a structured process for identifying and documenting the difference between "what is" and "what should be." The needs assessment process determines: (1) the differences which exist between a desired state of affairs with respect to important goals and functions and the present or actual state of conditions and (2) a list of prioritized needs from these identified differences.

In addition to prioritizing needs in terms of the ongoing functions and goals of a district a needs assessment should provide a sense of direction regarding new or emerging needs and issues.

A needs assessment is a systematic process which asks three relatively simple questions:

1. Where are we?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How do we get from here to there?

In essence, the results of a good needs assessment form the basis for sound goal setting and planning.

Changes Since 1981 and Guidelines for Interpreting Results

In an effort to improve the study the following changes were made:

- All instruments were critically reviewed by thirteen division or department heads to ensure adequate coverage of important areas and issues,
- Questions were edited to shorten and add more precision (the questionnaires were reduced by between 15 and 25 percent),
- Community members were polled for the first time in addition to parents,
- Eleven groupings of respondents were analyzed separately as compared to seven previously, and
- The functions were increased by adding Library/Media and School Board items to be more inclusive (19 functions are now measured as compared to 17 in the 1981 survey).

Because of these changes and the amount of time between surveys, in most instances direct item for item past to present comparisons were avoided When very similar questions were asked on state or national surveys in about the same time frame rough comparisons are possible. In the main we should regard the results as a "snapshot" of how people perceive the district now and where they think we should be headed.

This Report

The reader should bear in mind that this report is Part II - and contains only the results on the twenty-one questions covering educational issues. Also, in an effort to obtain valid data and keep the instruments from becoming too lengthy not all questions were asked of all respondent groups. Part I which deals with the prioritization of needs within the nineteen basic function areas mentioned earlier will be published under

separate cover. Taken together a wealth of information should be obtainable for planning purposes.

The system-wide responses which follow comprise the basic data set. Immediately following the detailed question by question results will come a "Summary" section which explores major trends, differences and patterns of response.

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S^{1*}	S^2	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CM	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
CATEGORY: EVALUATION/ACCOUNTABILITY												
122. Would you favor or oppose a system that would hold teachers and administrators more accountable for the progress of students?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Favor	38%	55%	31%	30%	34%	27%	60%	81%	80%	77%	--	65%
2. Oppose	40%	20%	44%	50%	49%	55%	15%	10%	10%	9%	--	22%
3. Don't know	22%	25%	25%	19%	17%	18%	25%	9%	10%	14%	--	13%
Number of Respondents	85	20	48	218	107	22	20	758	155	91	--	1,524
123. What grade would you give Dr. Gibbs, Superintendent of Saginaw Schools since 1978, in regard to the quality of the schools?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. A	10%	20%	0%	9%	9%	9%	19%	12%	9%	67%	--	14%
2. B	37%	60%	39%	41%	34%	50%	48%	34%	38%	24%	--	36%
3. C	42%	20%	39%	40%	41%	32%	33%	37%	36%	9%	--	36%
4. D	5%	0%	16%	9%	10%	4%	0%	11%	12%	--	--	9%
5. E	6%	0%	6%	2%	6%	4%	0%	6%	5%	--	--	5%
Number of Respondents	79	20	44	217	107	22	21	735	149	91	--	1,485

*Groups polled:

S^1 = Special education teachers in district building level programs.
S^2 = Special education teachers at Millet Center and all county-wide service locations (e.g., Holland Avenue and Early Childhood, etc.).
CE = Compensatory education teachers (i.e., Chapter 1, Article 3, State Bilingual, Migrant and Bilingual VII).
EL = Elementary teachers.
SE = Secondary teachers.
VE = Vocational education teachers at the Averill Career Opportunities Center.
AE = Adult Education and ABE teachers.
PA = Parents with students attending the Saginaw Public Schools.
CM = Community members not included in parent category above.
AD = Administrators and degreed professional/technical staff members.
ST = High school students.

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SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CN	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
124. During the past few years, would you say that the Saginaw Public School system has been getting better in quality, getting worse, or staying about the same?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Getting better	44%	60%	52%	55%	36%	32%	33%	31%	26%	84%	--	39%
2. Staying about the same	36%	20%	37%	33%	40%	55%	48%	45%	41%	13%	--	40%
3. Worse	10%	10%	6%	8%	21%	9%	9%	18%	22%	2%	--	15%
4. Don't know	10%	10%	4%	4%	3%	4%	9%	6%	11%	1%	--	6%
Number of Respondents	83	20	48	224	109	22	21	761	154	91	--	1,533
125. Generally, how would you rate the way your local school district spends money - excellent, good, fair, or poor?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Excellent	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3%	3%	36%	--	6%
2. Good	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	28%	21%	49%	--	29%
3. Fair	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	43%	42%	14%	--	40%
4. Poor	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	11%	19%	--	--	11%
5. Can't say	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	15%	15%	1%	--	13%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	762	153	91	--	1,006
126. How well does your school board represent the opinions of people like yourself?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Very well	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8%	11%	32%	--	11%
2. Somewhat	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	37%	28%	57%	--	37%
3. Not too well	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	14%	26%	6%	--	15%
4. Not well at all	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10%	9%	3%	--	9%
5. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	31%	26%	2%	--	28%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	761	156	91	--	1,008

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S^1	S^2	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CN	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
CATEGORY: EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS												
127. In general do you think students are made to work too hard in school, including homework, or not hard enough?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Too hard	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4%	2%	--	15%	7%
2. About right amount	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	46%	26%	--	70%	51%
3. Not hard enough	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	47%	62%	--	12%	38%
4. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3%	10%	--	3%	4%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	761	154	--	420	1,335
128. Would you favor extending the school year from 180 days to 185 days?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Favor	13%	15%	4%	10%	11%	27%	67%	45%	58%	--	--	35%
2. Oppose	73%	65%	77%	82%	79%	64%	33%	42%	32%	--	--	53%
3. Don't know	14%	20%	19%	8%	10%	9%	0%	13%	10%	--	--	12%
Number of Respondents	84	20	48	223	110	22	21	758	155	--	--	1,441
129. In your opinion, is the Saginaw Successful Schools Project (S^3P) enabling building staff to do a better job of teaching through building based planning?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	32%	63%	48%	51%	42%	32%	14%	16%	11%	70%	--	28%
2. No	34%	21%	31%	27%	42%	23%	5%	9%	11%	5%	--	16%
3. Don't know	34%	16%	21%	21%	16%	45%	81%	75%	78%	25%	--	55%
Number of Respondents	82	19	48	224	108	22	21	757	153	88	--	1,522

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CM	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
CATEGORY: BASIC SKILLS												
130. Do you favor or oppose a back-to-basics movement (an increased emphasis on reading, writing or arithmetic)?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Favor	82%	80%	85%	86%	84%	86%	86%	92%	90%	88%	65%	84%
2. Oppose	15%	15%	6%	8%	12%	14%	9%	4%	7%	8%	15%	9%
3. Don't know	2%	5%	9%	5%	4%	0%	5%	4%	3%	4%	20%	7%
Number of Respondents	85	20	47	220	110	22	21	759	158	90	418	1,950
CATEGORY: PROMOTION												
131. In your opinion, should students be promoted from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	32%	55%	48%	37%	50%	41%	62%	48%	72%	35%	29%	43%
2. No	58%	45%	50%	53%	37%	45%	38%	45%	22%	53%	61%	48%
3. Don't know	10%	0%	2%	10%	13%	14%	0%	7%	6%	12%	10%	9%
Number of Respondents	84	20	48	220	109	22	21	756	156	89	417	1,942
CATEGORY: ATTENDANCE												
132. Should something be done about students who persistently miss school?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	94%	97%	--	78%	90%
2. No	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2%	1%	--	14%	6%
3. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4%	2%	--	8%	4%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	759	157	--	419	1,335

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS							PA	CM	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE					
CATEGORY: EXTRA CURRICULAR												
133. How important are extra-curricular activities (like science fairs, spelling bees, sports) to a young person's education?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Extremely important	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	52%	43%	53%	41%	48%
2. Fairly important	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	39%	43%	45%	43%	41%
3. Not too important	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8%	12%	2%	12%	9%
4. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1%	2%	--	4%	2%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	761	158	91	419	1,429
CATEGORY: PARENT INVOLVEMENT												
134. Have you ever attended a school board meeting?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	32%	33%	--	--	32%
2. No	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	67%	66%	--	--	67%
3. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1%	1%	--	--	1%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	761	158	--	--	919
135. What grade would you give parents in this community for the job they are doing in raising their children to be self-disciplined and responsible young people?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. A	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	4%	5%	3%	3%	1%	12%	4%
2. B	5%	15%	9%	8%	6%	14%	9%	13%	7%	19%	20%	12%
3. C	49%	45%	40%	39%	36%	36%	43%	46%	43%	67%	35%	43%
4. D	32%	35%	40%	44%	45%	36%	33%	25%	27%	11%	18%	27%
5. E	9%	5%	9%	6%	9%	9%	5%	9%	12%	--	6%	8%
6. Don't know	5%	0%	2%	2%	3%	0%	5%	4%	8%	2%	9%	5%
Number of Respondents	85	20	47	223	110	22	21	758	153	89	418	1,946

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SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CN	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
CATEGORY: PUBLIC RELATIONS												
136. How well informed are you about the quality of education in the Saginaw Public Schools?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Well informed	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	22%	19%	--	--	22%
2. Somewhat informed	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	57%	55%	--	--	56%
3. Not too well informed	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20%	23%	--	--	20%
4. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1%	3%	--	--	1%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	761	153	--	--	914
137. Do you think the Saginaw News gives a fair and accurate picture of the public schools in this community?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	19%	30%	21%	22%	20%	18%	33%	36%	41%	--	21%	29%
2. No	60%	65%	64%	66%	65%	55%	38%	44%	41%	--	53%	51%
3. Don't know	21%	5%	14%	12%	15%	27%	29%	20%	18%	--	26%	20%
Number of Respondents	85	20	48	221	110	22	21	756	152	--	418	1,853
CATEGORY: OTHER AND/OR EXTRA SERVICES												
138. Would you be willing to support a county-wide millage of 1 mill or less to upgrade vocational education services? (1 mill = 1 dollar per 1,000 assessed valuation)												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	48%	43%	--	--	47%
2. No	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	26%	36%	--	--	28%
3. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	26%	21%	--	--	25%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	759	155	--	--	914

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CM	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
139. Should adult job placement and training services be operated by our schools?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	55%	46%	83%	--	56%
2. No	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	27%	37%	8%	--	27%
3. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	18%	17%	9%	--	17%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	759	156	91	--	1,006
140. Should the schools run child care (extended day) programs if these programs are self-supporting without tax dollars?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	55%	43%	--	--	53%
2. No	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	31%	45%	--	--	33%
3. Don't know	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	14%	12%	--	--	14%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	760	155	--	--	915
141. Some school districts operate professional development centers that provide on the job training to teachers and principals. Do you feel that the Saginaw Schools should operate such a training center?												
Ratings/Choices												
1. Yes	69%	70%	74%	64%	60%	73%	62%	63%	59%	86%	--	65%
2. No	15%	10%	13%	18%	25%	9%	9%	18%	20%	6%	--	17%
3. Don't know	15%	20%	13%	18%	15%	18%	29%	19%	21%	8%	--	18%
Number of Respondents	85	20	47	221	108	22	21	754	153	91	--	1,522

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CM	AO	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
142. The subjects listed below are some that could be covered in a special course for parents offered by the local schools. Please check the parenting education offerings that would interest you the MOST:												
Ratings/Choices												
1. What to do about drug, tobacco, and alcohol usage	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	49%	54%	--	--	50%
2. How to help a child choose a career	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	44%	34%	--	--	42%
3. How to help a child set high-achievement goals	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	50%	40%	--	--	49%
4. How to develop good work habits	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	52%	52%	--	--	52%
5. How to encourage reading	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	42%	52%	--	--	44%
6. How to increase interest in school and school subjects	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	48%	49%	--	--	48%
7. How to help a child organize his/her homework	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	35%	33%	--	--	35%
8. How to improve parent/child relationships	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	43%	36%	--	--	42%
9. How to improve a child's thinking and observation skills	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	49%	44%	--	--	48%
10. How to deal with a child's emotional problems	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	48%	44%	--	--	47%
11. How to use family activities to help a child do better in school	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	36%	35%	--	--	36%
12. How to improve a child's school behavior	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	34%	43%	--	--	35%
13. How to reduce television viewing	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	25%	32%	--	--	26%

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO PART II OF THE
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1985.

Questions by Category	RESPONDENT GROUPS											
	TEACHERS											
	S[1]	S[2]	CE	EL	SE	VE	AE	PA	CN	AD	ST	SYSTEM TOTAL
14. How to help a child get along with other children	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	27%	32%	--	--	28%
15. How to improve health habits	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20%	26%	--	--	21%
16. How to deal with dating	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	21%	20%	--	--	21%
Number of Respondents	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	772	159	--	--	931

SUMMARY

As mentioned before the responses to questions about current issues can provide decision makers with a sense of direction where there is general agreement and caution them about areas of controversy. In addition, an examination of the characteristics of group responses can yield valuable information about special interest groups. To accomplish these ends the issues question results were examined in such a manner as to summarize them in three ways, 1) issues on which there was agreement, 2) issues on which there were differences, and 3) patterns of responses between and within groups. These summarizations will be presented in this section.

A brief explanation of the decision rules and guidelines employed in determining patterns of agreement, differences, etc., seems called for. For determining that an issue should be placed in the "agreement" category all groups had to evidence a pattern of response, ignoring the "Don't know" alternative, that showed a plurality in the same direction. For those questions where a set of graded alternatives were used rather than "favor" or "oppose" the responses immediately above and below the neutral or middle response were compared to determine the direction of the plurality using essentially the same rules. In cases where there was no neutral response alternative the choices that could be labeled as favorable were combined and contrasted with the choices (an equal number) that could be labeled opposed, again using essentially the same rule. Areas of "difference" were the items on which there was little or no agreement between groups.

In order to describe the patterns of responses within and between groups the data were reviewed across a series of related issues and compared group to group (and within a group if several sub-groups had been identified).

Thus it was possible to detect additional trends of themes characterizing a group response that might otherwise have been ignored.

One question (#142) did not lend itself to any of these guidelines because it merely solicited choices that were more or less independent of each other. Those results were ranked by frequency of choice and presented in descending order.

Areas of Agreement

On twelve of twenty (60%) of the issues there was consensus. What follows is a brief amplification of those results.

Question #	Comment
123	• All groups tended to give Dr. Gibbs relatively high grades. Contrasting the A's and B's combined against the D's and E's combined revealed that there were 3 to 4 times more high grades than low ones.
124	• There was general agreement that the quality of the Saginaw Public School System has been getting better in the past few years. In comparing the "Getting better" selections to the "Worse" selections virtually all groups perceived improvement. It should be noted that many groups believed that things had "Stayed the same."
126	• Most people polled felt that the school board represented them either somewhat or very well. Of the three groups polled (parents, community members and administrators) community members were the most conservative though still positive. (See also #134 for further insight.)
130	• The vast majority of all groups favor the back-to-basics movement. This movement enjoys even more support now than it did in the 1980-81 survey when it was also generally supported. All groups polled with the exception of students favored back-to-basics at rates of 80% or more. (For further insight see #133 also.)
132	• All groups polled including students believe something must be done about students who persistently miss school.
133	• There was substantial support of the importance of extracurricular activities in educating a young person. This was corroborated by a recent NIE study that found people would not support reforms if it meant cutting these activities. Interestingly parent perceptions were nearly identical to those of administrators. These results should be kept in mind when interpreting the powerful support on the back-to-basics movement. (#130 above)

Question #	Comment
134	• Only about one-third of the community in general or parents in particular ever attend a board meeting. (Relates to #126 as well.)
135	• Nearly all groups* agreed that parents were not doing very well at raising their children to be self disciplined and responsible. Far higher percentages of respondents awarded parents D's and E's than A's and B's with the exception of administrators and students.
137	• Greater percentages of respondents believed they did not get a fair and accurate picture of the public schools through the Saginaw News than the percentages that did. However, this perception was not as strong as it was in the 1980-81 survey.
138	• Most parents (48%) and community members (43%) evidenced a willingness to support a one mill or less county-wide millage to upgrade vocational education. About 25% were undecided at that point.
139	• There is consensus between parents, community members and administrators that job placement and training programs should be operated by the school system.
141	• Strong support was given the proposal for the school system to operate a professional development center to provide on the job training for teachers and administrators.

*This was made an exception to the decision rule because of the consistency and strength of the pattern and the fact that only two of the eleven groups polled took a different position.

Areas of Difference

As stated earlier a "difference" was considered to exist when there was little or no agreement between respondent groups. Seven of the twenty questions (40%) yielded results that indicate differences in perception.

Question #	Comment
122	• Opinion was divided regarding the desirability of increasing the accountability for student progress of teachers and administrators. Five groups favored increased accountability (administrators, parents, community members, adult education teachers and special education teachers in county-wide programs) while five other groups (all sub-groups of the teacher population) opposed increased accountability.
127	• Of the three groups polled there was little agreement as to whether school work was "too hard", "about right" or "not hard enough." Community members indicated that students should be made to work harder. Parents were nearly evenly divided between the views that students are made to work the right amount and not made to work hard enough. The great majority (70%) of students believed the workload was about right.
128	• The issue of extending the school year (by five days in this survey) has been aired nationally since it was first recommended in the Nation at Risk Report which was published in April 1983. Community members, adult education teachers and to only a slight extent parents favor such a change. All others (the remaining teacher sub-groups) oppose such a move. In the main these findings go along with those reported in the Spring 1985 NIE study wherein less than 50% of those polled favored lengthening the year by a month. Noteworthy is the difference of opinion between the general public (community members) and parents. Parents are a lot less sure about lengthening the school year than non-parents.
129	• The question about the ability of the Saginaw Successful School Project (S^3P) to improve teaching through building based planning produced mixed results. It appears that group results were directly related to exposure to and knowledge about

Question #	Comment
129 (Cont'd)	the program, e.g., administrators and elementary teachers were very positive while adult education teachers, parents and community members were not. This pattern seems to reflect awareness of S^3P or lack of it.
131	• Another issue which has received national attention in recent years is promoting students from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations. Eighty percent of the general public polled in a recent NIE study favored the use of examinations for this purpose. Saginaw's community members seemed to view the issue similarly (72% in favor). However, local parents were nearly evenly divided (48% favor, 45% opposed with 7% undecided). Students and most educators, administrators included, were opposed to this procedure.
136	• In terms of how well informed people think they are about the quality of education in Saginaw there was only a slight difference in perception. While the majority of parents and community members (57% and 55% respectively) felt "somewhat informed", about the same percentage of community members (23%) felt "not too well informed" as the percentage of parents (22%) who felt "well informed."
140	• Parents and community members were asked whether the district should operate child care programs if the programs are self supporting. Parents strongly favor (55% yes) operating such programs while community members are narrowly opposed (45% no). Substantial percentages of parents and community members (14% and 12% respectively) were undecided on this issue.

Patterns of Results on Issues Questions Within and Between Respondent Groups

- Administrators tended to be more positive than other groups on questions having to do with evaluating or rating the schools (# 123, 124, 125, 126 and 129). This may be the result of their broader view of the district and more intimate knowledge of what the Board and administration is trying to accomplish.

- The results strongly suggest that polling parents and community members separately was a worthwhile endeavor. Though their responses were very similar on 11 issues, on 10 (47%) others they differed from 5-24%. In general, parents were more conservative about changing the format and methods of schooling than other community members (see 128 "extending the school year" and 131 "passing examinations for promotion"). At the same time they were more favorable than other community members on issues dealing with new services (see 139 "job placement", 140 "child care", and 141 "professional development center").

  In the Spring of 1985 the National Institute of Education surveyed the public on some of the same issues covered in this needs assessment. Saginaw parents evidenced the same pattern of response as the national sample on issues related to the length of the school year (question 128) and the importance of extracurricular activities (question 133) but vastly different than the national sample regarding the use of tests for grade to grade promotion (question 131). On the latter question 48% of the parents in Saginaw favored the testing as compared to 95 of the national sample.

  Even where the percentages differed the responses of parents and community members generally trended in the same direction except on one issue where they seemed to significantly disagree. Question 127 related to how hard students are made to work in school. Only 47% of the parents thought the work load was not hard enough compared to 62% of the community members.

- Next to parents - teachers returned more completed instruments than any other group (644 instruments). For this reason and the fact that it was known that teachers' level and specific assignment affect perceptions, their data were broken down accordingly, i.e., their results are not viewed as a single set of responses. Since the breakdowns resulted in seven categories of "teachers" it is somewhat difficult to describe the pattern of responses. Nevertheless some highlights are observable.

  Taken as a whole teachers seemed to respond more conservatively than administrators yet more favorably than parents and community members. Recall their perspective would be one that could be characterized as more intimate on school affairs than community members yet not as broad based as administrators (see #124 regarding the quality of schooling as an example). With the exception of adult education teachers and special education teachers serving in county-wide programs the various teacher groups were generally in agreement on most issues.

There were six issues on which there occurred substantial differences in responses within the teacher categories. Of these adult education staff had a different pattern of response than their colleagues all six times and the special education teachers in county-wide programs four times. Upon examining the differences it was apparent that they were an outgrowth of unique experiences these groups either had or missed. For example on question 129 regarding whether S^3P would enable staff to do a better job of building level planning, adult education teachers were the least favorable (they had not yet been involved in the project while all others had) and the county-wide special education teachers were the most positive (they were the most recent additions to the program). Similarly adult education teachers were quite favorable toward extending the school year (#128) probably because they are the only ones who would gain income from such a move. Both special education and adult education teachers were relatively more positive on promotion through testing (#131) than the rest of the teachers probably because they have to do more with students in the way of performance testing and individual programming than other teacher groups. In the same vein both these groups were more favorable toward increased accountability in the schools (#122) than other teachers. They also rated the Superintendent substantially higher (#123) than other teachers.

- In general students as a group seemed to want to maintain the status quo. For example, 70% of them felt they did "about the right amount" of school work a perception not shared by the community, far fewer students than parents or community members urged the back-to-basics movement, and still fewer, promotion through testing. Students like teachers were more critical than parents and community members on the coverage of the Saginaw News probably because they are more aware than people outside the schools of the number and nature of newsworthy events. With the exception of students who became more critical - the news was rated similarly in the 1981 needs assessment. Finally, though students were kinder than any other group in rating the job being done by parents (see #135) 53% of them would only give their parents a "C" or a "D".

Question #

142. The subjects listed below are some that could be covered in a special course for parents offered by the local schools. Please check the parent education offerings that would interest you the MOST:

Alternative Choices Ranked (1 - Most Frequently Selected, etc.) According to Parent Response

Choices	PA	CM	Rank
• How to develop good work habits	52%	52%	1
• How to help a child set high achievement goals	50%	40%	2
• How to improve a child's thinking and observation skills	49%	44%	3.5
• What to do about drug, tobacco, and alcohol usage	49%	54%	3.5
• How to increase interest in school and school subjects	48%	49%	5.5
• How to deal with a child's emotional problems	48%	44%	5.5
• How to help a child choose a career	44%	34%	7
• How to improve parent/child relationships	43%	36%	8
• How to encourage reading	42%	52%	9
• How to use family activities to help a child do better in school	36%	35%	10
• How to help a child organize his/her homework	35%	33%	11
• How to improve a child's school behavior	34%	43%	12
• How to help a child get along with other children	27%	32%	13
• How to reduce television viewing	25%	32%	14
• How to deal with dating	21%	20%	15
• How to improve health habits	20%	26%	16
Number of Respondents	772	159	931 System

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

TABLE A.1. GROUPS SURVEYED AND RETURN RATES FOR THE 1985 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Groups Surveyed	Count and Description of Individuals in Sample or Population	Returns #	Returns %
Parents	A random sample of 6,603 parents who had students enrolled in the School District of the City of Saginaw during the 1984-85 school year.	772	12
Community Members	A random sample of 2,684 non-parents who voted in the November, 1984 presidential election.	159	6
Administrators	All 123 administrators or degreed professional, technical staff paid March 15, 1985.	91	74
Special Education Staff Serving or Based in Regular Education Building (S^1)	All 133 S^1 special education staff paid March 15, 1985.	105	79
Special Education Staff Based in a Specialized Center [i.e., Millet, Holland Avenue, and Early Childhood] (S^2)	All 56 S^2 special education staff paid March 15, 1985.	24	43
Compensatory Education Teachers	All 85 compensatory education teachers paid March 15, 1985.	58	68
Vocational Education Teachers	All 44 teachers at the Averill Career Opportunities Center (COC) paid March 15, 1985.	23	52
Elementary Teachers	All 351 elementary teachers paid March 15, 1985.	273	78
Secondary Teachers	All 323 secondary teachers, excluding COC teachers, paid March 15, 1985.	137	42
Adult, Adult Basic, and Adult Continuing Education Teachers	All 69 adult and continuing education teachers paid March 15, 1985.	24	35
Students	A sample of approximately 462 students from grades 10, 11, and 12 of both high schools.	434	94

APPENDIX A

A STUDY OF ITEM RESPONSE BIAS: PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER SAMPLES

A study of the preceding Table A.1 reveals that 12% of the parents and 6% of the community members returned questionnaires, or a combined parent/community member total of 10% (931 of 9,287) returned completed instruments. What difference, if any, existed between the 10% and the 90% who chose not to return their questionnaires?

There are a number of strategies to answer that question. A. N. Oppenheim (1964, p. 34) in his book entitled, Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement discusses a number of these techniques.

The approach chosen for this study was to compare early respondents with late respondents in terms of their answers to the questionnaire. Researchers had found that respondents who returned completed instruments late closely resembled non-respondents in their attitudes and opinions. Thus by comparing late and early response patterns an idea of whether non-respondents differ can be obtained.

Three educational issue questions were chosen to compare the responses of typical and late responding parents/community members. A chi-square test of significance for proportions was the statistical test of choice. The null hypothesis was that of no difference between the two groups (typical and late respondents) in the proportions responding to any option on the three selected multiple choice questions. The alternate hypothesis was that a greater portion of either typical or late respondents would choose one or more than the other options with greater frequency. The alpha level was set at .05 with a two tail test being indicated.

APPENDIX A

Table A.2 below gives the cell frequencies and marginal totals of responses per question for typical (T) and late (L) respondents. The calculated chi-square value (x^2) and the probability (P) associated with the calculated value are also recorded for each question.

TABLE A.2. CHI-SQUARES USED TO TEST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPICAL (T) AND LATE (L) PARENT/COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON THREE SELECTED EDUCATIONAL ISSUES.

124. During the past few years, would you say that the Saginaw Public School system has been getting better in quality, getting worse or staying about the same?

	Better	Worse	Same	Total
T	239	360	153	752
L	39	44	17	100
	278	404	170	852

$x^2 = 2.18$ df = 2

P = 0.66

126. How well does your school board represent the opinions of people like yourself?

	Very Well	Somewhat	Not Too Well	Not Well At All	Don't Know	Total
T	70	281	137	80	246	814
L	8	45	10	7	33	103
	78	326	147	87	279	917

$x^2 = 6.11$ df = 4

P = 0.80

TABLE A.2 Continued

136. How well informed are you about the quality of education in the Saginaw Public Schools?

	Well Informed	Somewhat Informed	Not Too Well Informed	Total
T	176	463	161	800
L	26	52	25	103
	202	515	186	903

$x^2 = 2.06$ df = 2

P = .64

Table A.3 below summarizes the chi-square statistics, their associated probabilities, and the decision relative to each for the three selected educational issues.

TABLE A.3. DECISIONS RELATED CHI-SQUARES OF DIFFERENCES OR LACK OF THEM BETWEEN TYPICAL AND LATE RESPONDENTS ON THREE QUESTIONS.

Question	Chi-Square	Associated Probability	Decision Relative To "No Difference" (Null Hypothesis)
124. Saginaw Schools Getting Better?	2.18	.66	Don't Reject
125. School Board Represents Opinions?	6.11	.80	Don't Reject
136. Informal About Quality of Education?	2.06	.64	Don't Reject

A perusal of Table A.3 reveals that the hypothesis of no difference between late and typical respondents cannot be rejected. Thus it seems safe to assume that the responses obtained from typical parents and community members would be much like those from non-responding parents and community members.